

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your time and the opportunity to allow me to voice my concerns and my adamant opposition to this proposed piece of legislation, House bill 455, the Big Sky Rivers Act. My name is Jim Greil. I am a fourth generation Montanan, and I have lived my entire life near banks of the Clark Fork river near Bonner Montana. My great grandfather immigrated to America and homesteaded property near our current home. After my great grandfather, my grandfather also bought lots adjacent to the river and then later on, my father did as well. Our family has owned and cared for riverside property for well over 100 years. Because of the natural topography and terrain of our land, our property is squeezed between highway 200 and the banks of the Clark Fork. According to the provisions of this bill, although it would be technically possible for future generations of our family to build outside the draconian constraints listed within it, it would be considerably impractical to do so. Because of the fact that the entirety of our property also lies on a bluff, far above the level of the river, this bill also makes no provision to address the fact that any development of our lands within the restricted areas set forth within this bill would have zero impact upon the river due to the sheer height that we are above the actual river. In short, this bill is a one size fits all attempt that effectively wipes out generations of entitlement to our property for personal home development not only by my family, but my children and grandchildren as well, property which we have only developed in the most careful way over the years, and with the utmost regard for our friends, neighbors, the community and with the greatest respect for the river itself. This bill goes far beyond normal protections for river corridors that should be developed and imposes set backs and other measures that amount to nothing more than sheer taking of our land, rights and proper stewardship of the river. This bill also has the audacity to allow special interest businesses the right to exemption within its verbiage as well. There are already numerous rules and regulations and other measures that both the state and county have in place to prohibit undesirable and unhealthy development along our Montana river corridors. This bill is nothing more than a bad solution in search of a problem. Montana already has the best regulated and best developed river corridors in the west, and our family is no different that the multitudes of other Montana families that own property next to a river, we all want to see the river developed in a responsible manner and we have acted in good faith and under the auspices of the current rules and regulations set forth by the county and state. It is important in the creation of our laws and in the stewardship of our lands, both tasks which we ultimately perform as private citizens; we need to remember that it is our responsibility not to act as neither democrats nor republicans, but most dutifully as Montanans. Our family and countless other adjacent riverside owners have acted this way for generation after generation, and we do not be wished to be penalized for our good faith efforts and lawful actions. It is also my opinion, that if a bill similar to this was to be submitted in the future, that it MUST at least carry a provision that it does not apply to current landowners, but only when property rights are transferred. Once again, I implore this committee to take the responsible action of stopping this bill or at the very least, to make sure that ethical and realistic provisions are added that do not penalize or outright take property rights from current landowners. Thank you for your time regarding this matter.